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Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Illinois Environmental Prote
Doug Scott, Director

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Fact Sheet

Controlled Prairie Burn
BATH, Inc. Landfill
Macon County, Illinois

Illinois EPA has scheduled the first controlled prairie burn at the former BATH, Inc. Landfill site for late February or March 2008. The specific date of the event will depend on weather conditions. The site is located on the west side of Highway 48 along the south bank of the Sangamon River. The controlled burn is necessary to eliminate accumulated trees and to stimulate new growth and diversity in the plant life. It will also eliminate invasive plant species, which have more shallow root systems than the mix of prairie plants on the landfill cap.

Prior to the construction of the new landfill cap, erosion was obvious over much of the landfill, waste was exposed, and rainwater moved freely through the waste materials to create leachate that threatened the area groundwater and the Sangamon River. Leachate forms from water traveling through the landfill and contacting waste material.

BATH, Inc. Landfill is one of the 33 abandoned landfills identified by Illinois EPA in 1998 as having environmental problems that needed immediate attention. The Illinois State Legislature responded in 1999 by appropriating funds to investigate and conduct corrective actions, if necessary, on these landfills. Illinois EPA has spent approximately $2.8 million on repairs to the BATH, Inc. Landfill.

Why is it necessary to burn the plants on top of the landfill?

By burning the old vegetation, the prairie plants are strengthened and become better established on the soil landfill cap. These hardy plants have spreading root systems that hold the soil in place so that erosion does not damage the cap and lead to problems such as those (mentioned above) that existed before the extensive site work. Additionally, the burn assists in the removal of thatch (dead plant material) and benefits the soil through the addition of potash, a fertilizer.

Under what authority will Illinois EPA conduct the burn?

An Open Burning Permit has been issued by the Illinois EPA for this burn.

Will the local fire departments be involved with the burn?

Yes, the Decatur Fire Department and Macon County Rural Fire Protection District have been notified about this burn. The Illinois EPA's contractors have provided a protocol for the burn and will monitor all safety factors.

Will the gas vents on the landfill be a problem?

No. Illinois EPA has developed safety provisions that include shutting off the gas vents several hours before the burn and providing setback areas from the vents where there is no vegetation to burn. Since methane gas could be present at areas other than the vents, it is measured ahead of time, and any areas producing

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greater than 1.5% gas by volume in air will be marked and avoided. These areas will be mowed, raked and watered.

Can anyone view the burn, or will access be restricted?

Access to the site will be restricted to essential burn project personnel. Illinois EPA does not encourage members of the general public to visit the site during the burn due to safety concerns and a lack of parking.

Who has been notified that the burn is taking place?

Besides the site contact list, which includes area residents, local, state and federal officials, Illinois EPA has notified the following:

- Macon County Sheriff and Fire Protection Officials
- Macon County Highway Engineer
- Decatur Fire Department and Mayor's office
- Decatur Township Highway Commissioner

Once the burn is complete, how long will it be before the vegetation grows back?

Vegetation should grow back to a lush cover within four weeks.

How often does the burn need to take place?

The first burn usually occurs three years after the prairie plants are seeded. Then, it is recommended that burning occur every third year, once the plants are well established, to eliminate invasive species.

For further information, you may contact:

Carol Fuller
Community Relations Coordinator
Office of Community Relations
217/524-8807
carol.fuller@illinois.gov

John Richardson
Illinois EPA Project Manager
State Sites Unit
217/782-0243
John.richardson@illinois.gov

Landfill gas vent amid prairie plants

Other fact sheets about this site are available on the Illinois EPA web site at:
http://www.epa.state.il.us/community-relations/fact-sheets/bath-landfill/index.html

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